

# ENQA Members' Forum

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## **Quality Assurance Approaches in Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa**

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# Outline of Presentation

1. Background to Quality in HE in Africa
  - The Rise & Fall of Higher Education in Africa
  - HE in Africa at Beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> Century
  - Beginning of Revitalization
2. Quality Assurance Initiatives in HE in Africa:  
National, Regional & Continental
3. Consequences of Poor Quality and Challenges in  
Implementing QA in HE
4. Two New Initiatives/Approaches



# **1. Background to Quality in HE in Africa**

## The Rise & Fall of HE in Africa (1)

- Modern public HE in Africa has its roots in university colleges created during European colonial period
- After independence in 1960s, colleges became universities modelled on European ones – same academic structure, governance, curricula, methods of instruction, etc.
- 1960-1980: African universities thrived with generous support from their government & Europe
- Several became centres of excellence, e.g. Makerere, Ibadan, Khartoum, Cheikh Anta Diop.

## The Rise & Fall of HE in Africa (2)

- 1970s & 1980s:
  - economic crisis
  - political upheavals, wars
  - military regimes, dictatorship
  - gross misuse of resources
- These inevitably had an impact on funding of HE
- 1990s: World Bank's decision to support basic education and not higher education
- In spite of being cash-strapped, African universities continued to survive & to increase HE provision, vital for development; but Quality suffered
- 1998: the saving grace – UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education

# HE in Africa at Beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> Century (1/2)

- Increased enrolment – institutional massification
- Reduced public funding, insufficient infrastructural development
- Lack of qualified academic staff – brain drain
- Disastrous effect of HIV/AIDS
- Poor governance, political interference
- Poor internal efficiency
- Mismatch between graduate output & employment
- Increasing presence of private HEIs and CBHE, often of dubious quality
- Wide consensus on importance of improving quality of HEIs in Africa for them to play development role in achieving EFA targets and the then MDGs

# HE in Africa at Beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> Century (2/2)

## Agenda for Improving Quality in HE in Africa

- Control student enrolment according to capacity
- Improve & expand infrastructure, but with little increase in public funding
- Train & retain existing academic staff, & recruit qualified staff to replace ageing ones
- Increase research output
- Generate alternate sources of funding – cost-sharing
- Ensure relevance of programmes, greater linkages with productive sectors & improve employability of students
- Improve governance & efficiency in management of HEIs
- Wide use of ICT in T&L, research, administration, etc.
- Meet demands for greater transparency & accountability

## Beginning of Revitalization (1/2)

- Development assistance to post-secondary education in Africa increased significantly after UNESCO WCHE 1998:
  - 1990-1999 - \$ 110m/year
  - 2000-2005 - \$ 515m/year
- Revitalization really started as from 2005
- AUC's COMEDAF II, Algeria, April 2005: HE recognised as a priority area
- African Union's Action Plan for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Decade of Education (2006-2015) identifies HE as one of 7 focus areas
- AUC's harmonization strategy (2007): greater intra-regional mobility, benchmarking & QA in HE

## Beginning of Revitalization (2/2)

- 2007 Africa-EU Strategic Partnership: triangular cooperation (A-A-E) for development; teacher education at all levels; Africa-EU cooperation in S&T research for development
- Regional Economic Communities (RECs) (SADC, EAC, ECOWAS, etc.) in Africa take the cue from AU and include HE in their respective plan of action
- UNESCO WCHE 2009 gave special attention to Africa. Noted progress made since WCHE 1998 but recognised that many challenges still existed in revitalisation of HE in Africa.



## **2. QA Initiatives in HE in Africa:**

**National, Regional & Continental**

# QA Initiatives in HE in Africa (1)

## National Initiatives

- End 1990s & early 2000s: several HEIs e.g. U of Mauritius , St Mary's Uni College, Ethiopia, U of Dar es Salaam, introduced QA at institutional level through collaboration with European universities, before introduction of national QA processes
- c. 2001: South Africa's Council for Higher Education was first to introduce national QA processes through its HEQC
- In several of African countries a QA unit/section under the Commission or Council for HE undertakes this function (Nigeria, Kenya, Mauritius, Ghana); in some countries Quality is assured by the Ministry responsible for HE
- A few countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Tanzania) have set up specific QA agencies for Accreditation and/or Evaluation processes in HEIs
- However, only about half of 48 SSA countries have national QA agencies

# QA Initiatives in HE in Africa (2)

## Regional Initiatives

- 2003: HEQMISA, an initiative started in 2002 to promote QA in SADC (Southern African) HEIs with support from GIZ(GTZ); assistance provided to Malawi, Namibia, etc. Not much progress made
- 2005: IUCEA embarks on promoting QA systems in public & private HEIs in 5 East African countries with support from DAAD; the project has now been extended to West & Central Africa
- 2005-06: CAMES undertakes LMD reform as per the Bologna Process in Francophone HEIs to improve Quality; it is also responsible for Accreditation; but no explicit activities in Evaluation processes; same with CEMAC for Central African countries; and UNESCO Bamako Cluster Office & UEMOA for West African countries

# QA Initiatives in HE in Africa (3)

## Continental Initiatives

- 2007: After surveying HEI needs for QA in a first phase, AAU launches its second phase for promoting QA in HEIs
- 2009: AfriQAN formally launched and hosted by AAU. Mainly for capacity building of national QA agencies, but also HEIs. Initially supported by World Bank & UNESCO
- Pilot African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) for rating HEIs launched by AUC in 2010; uses self-assessment against set standards + external evaluation i.e. a mixture of Accreditation & Evaluation processes. 32 HEIs responded. Second call sent out in 2014
- ICQAHEA as QA Forum held every 1-2 years by Bamako Cluster Office with support from GUNI Africa, 7<sup>th</sup> Conference in 2015 in Abuja, Nigeria
- 2010-2012: Africa Quality Connect project run by AAU, EUA & IUQB to build institutional capacity through Partnership. EUA's IEP methodology applied to 5 African univs. Was successful but not continued because of lack of funding



### **3. Consequences of Poor Quality & Challenges in Implementing QA in HE**

## Consequences of Poor Quality in HE

- In spite of many efforts, Quality of HE in Africa is still wanting, as evidenced by several surveys and reports
- In 2010, NUC of Nigeria withdrew accreditation of academic departments in over 20 Nigerian universities – lack of infrastructure & qualified academic staff
- In 2011, Engg Reg Board of Kenya refused to recognize engg degrees from 3 leading public univs – poor curricula, lack of qualified staff & insufficient physical facilities
- In 2011, Council of Legal Education of Kenya rejected applications to practice law from graduates of several public & private univs – similar grounds
- In South Africa as well many law firms find LLB graduates deficient in basic skills for practising law
- In 2014, IUCEA reported survey of employers in 5 East African countries: 51-62% of graduates considered as ‘half-baked’

# Challenges in Implementing QA in HE

- Many initiatives in promoting QA in HE in Africa but they are disparate & uncoordinated, mostly at regional levels, with little collaboration among regions & key organisations
- Effective application of QA process requires institutional QA systems to be set up; lack of knowledge about QA process, inadequate capacity, too heavy teaching & administrative load of academic staff & lack of financial resources are major handicaps
- National QA agencies also lack trained staff & capacity for implementing Evaluation process in HEIs; few have developed guidelines and standards
- Evaluation process rarely applied to private HEIs – mainly Accreditation
- Lack of experience in Africa in applying Evaluation process to ODL and CBHE
- Very little work done on QA in postgraduate programmes, yet they are vital for Africa's development



## **4. Two New Initiatives/Approaches**

# Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance & Accreditation (HAQAA)

- HAQAA is part of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, is funded by EU
- Partners are ENQA (coordinated by Univ of Barcelona), EUA, AAU & DAAD
- Launched in February 2016, covers period Dec 2015-Nov 2018
- Main objectives:
  - Development of a Pan-African QA & Accreditation System & Framework
  - Enhance regional collaboration in QA & regional networks
  - Capacity building for both internal & external QA
  - Promoting good practices between Europe & Africa
  - Build upon regional initiatives and political priorities

# Benchmarking of African Universities Initiative

- Initiative being developed by the World Bank as part of its Partnership in App Sc Engg & Tech (PASET) project
- Main objective is to improve quality & relevance of univs by comparing data & performance indicators with other univs
- A pilot phase of 7 SSA univs undertaken in 2014 with assistance of Shanghai Jiao Tong Univ (SJTU)
- A major workshop held in Nov 2015, co-organised with AAU & attended by some 100 reps from wide range of African HE stakeholders; methodology, comparators/indicators discussed
- Following strong endorsement, first phase of benchmarking to be launched in 2016 in partnership with AAU, regional & national African QA agencies and SJTU
- Main activity of first phase will be benchmarking capacity building in QA agencies and univs



**THANK YOU**